November 7, 2012

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary of Agriculture
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

On behalf of older Americans and our AARP State Offices in the eastern U.S. – as well as our charitable arm, the AARP Foundation – I write to thank you and your agency staff for partnering with so many of our volunteers and staff in addressing the immeasurable devastation left by Hurricane Sandy. The recovery efforts underway require ongoing collaboration, and we urge the U.S. Department of Agriculture to sustain its current efforts and make available certain administrative exceptions where necessary to ensure that the most vulnerable persons and families can have access to essential nutrition. AARP not only echoes the call for common-sense approaches during times of disasters, but we are prepared to work with your agency to achieve the kind of success that will reflect the underlying compassion that sustains our nation.

Specifically, AARP joins earlier Congressional legislators, as well as state and local officials, requesting your support in providing mass Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits to those states and counties most affected by Hurricane Sandy’s havoc; approving disaster relief via D-SNAP to those counties most affected and applying for relief; broadly waiving the unprepared meal requirements for those unable to store, preserve, or prepare meals for a reasonable period so people have access to food; and finally, increasing resources from The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) in those areas most devastated by Hurricane Sandy.

AARP and our state offices, as well as the AARP Foundation, have already partnered with many charities, food banks, soup kitchens, and religious and community organizations to help in the affected areas. We are also actively raising funds to help supplement the resources directed at relief in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy. We are proud of our past anti-hunger efforts with USDA and the charitable community in all of the affected states, and we intend to continue our efforts and partnership in the future.

Thank you again for your support and leadership in helping the communities devastated by Hurricane Sandy to recover with both speed and dignity. If you have any questions,
please feel free to call me or contact Joyce A. Rogers, Senior Vice President for Government Affairs, at jarogers@aarp.org or call at (202) 434-3750.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Nancy A. LeaMond
Executive Vice President
State & National Group